

## *chapter one*

Wiesbaden, Germany, October 1945

The man's pale face was cracked, the scars of his ordeal revealed under the ribbon of sunlight streaming through the dirty window. Just under his chin, a ridge of pink paint hinted at the jowls that told his age, but the same paint gave a youthful rosiness to his cheek. He looked at Anna with near-black eyes, his expression defiant and expectant, as if they were engaged in conversation and it was her turn to reply. A light warping torqued the canvas in its frame, and a small tear was visible at one corner, but it was nothing that wasn't fixable. Anna lowered her face toward the painting as it rested on the swatch of cloth the conservators used to protect the precious inventory, and when she was sure no one was looking, she ran her hand across the rough paint, feeling its texture on her fingertips. She knew she shouldn't touch it, even with gloves, but the temptation was too

great. The familiar sounds of army boots squeaking on the waxed floors and the low rumble of American voices continued in the near background, and the sun illuminated the dust in the air. She inhaled the distant oily scent and exhaled it for a long time, sending a cloud of tiny particles swirling toward the ceiling. She considered what the *Man in a Green Jacket* had endured in order to arrive here, into her care. Months in a damp cellar wrapped in bed sheets alongside a few dozen of his fellow travelers had not diminished the gleam in his eyes nor weakened the set of his shoulders. It was a painting that told of another time. What would the man say, if he could speak?

“Let’s get you back home,” she said. “You’ve been very patient.” She turned the painting over on the work table, which was really just one of the old oversized doors from the back of the building balanced on a pair of smaller folding tables.

She was so engrossed in reading the gallery and exhibition labels on the back of the painting that she didn’t notice Cooper step into the workroom.

“Frau Klein? Can you speed this along, please?” He stood in the half-open door, rolling the sleeve of his uniform down his arm. “The new hire will be here soon. Let’s meet up in my office.” Captain Henry Cooper was her immediate superior—she his translator and assistant, he an architect assigned to safeguard Germany’s damaged monuments and restitute its stolen art for the Monuments Men unit Anna had fallen into a job with. It was no small task, for sure, and one made all the more interesting by Cooper’s penchant for ignoring the military’s protocols.

“I’m almost done here.” She turned back to her work, adjusting the table lamp to get a better look at the hodgepodge of stamps, labels,

and numbers that told the painting's story. Anna knew by now the familiar stencils of the ERR, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Hitler's ruthless art thieving unit. She made a note of the markings on the condition report part of the long and repetitive intake form, following the established protocol. This canvas, an oil painting of a seated man looking over his left shoulder, likely belonged to the same collector as the dozens of others she had catalogued over the last few days. The Nazi cataloging stamps on the back told that it had been taken from a Jewish family in Frankfurt. Thanks to meticulous Nazi record keeping, the Americans had already made good progress on connecting the paintings with their rightful owners. The only problem, and it was a big one, was finding those owners, if they were even still alive. Of all the Jewish collectors whose paintings they had identified, the Americans had not found a single one yet.

"Is that another one of the Morgenstern collection?" Cooper appeared next to her and leaned forward on his elbows, his face close to the canvas. "How many does that make?"

"Twenty-nine so far. But this is the most valuable I've seen. It's by Emil Nolde."

Cooper leaned over the painting, studying the topography of the canvas. "I have to say, I think I like these crazy Expressionists. They are growing on me."

Anna straightened to put some space between them. His casual proximity still made her uncomfortable, even though he meant nothing by it. Americans were always standing too close and talking too loud. After working with them for almost three months, she still wasn't used to it.

"Who is this new hire?" she asked. Whoever he was, he was getting his own office and a personal welcome from Cooper. "He must

be pretty high up. Is he from America?" Maybe it was a famous curator or art historian. Anna pictured a fusty man with heavy glasses and English tweed jackets. She watched as one worker wheeled a desk chair past the door and another followed, carrying a desk lamp. Anna had been asking for a lamp for her tiny desk for two weeks and had been told there were none.

"Nope. From Frankfurt. And it's a she. Frau Eva Lange, of the Staedel Museum." Cooper's marble-mouthed German made Anna smile. "Lots of knowledge about the goings-on during the war, so she should be a real help in terms of finding owners and catching the bad guys. Haven't met her, but Captain Farmer says she's top-notch. Even the bigwigs vouched for her.

He grinned. "That'll make the guys in Munich take notice of our little operation."

Munich was the bigger, more prestigious Monuments Men Collecting Point, dealing with major collections stolen from Jewish collectors in Vienna and beyond. The ramshackle Wiesbaden Collecting Point run by the bespectacled and starched Captain Walter Farmer was, by contrast, not as glamorous, although it was at this moment in possession of thousands of works of art from German state-owned collections, which the Nazis had hidden in a salt mine, as well as a few pieces stolen and looted from private citizens. Hundreds of crates from the Merkers Mine had been delivered weeks ago, and since then, the smell of salt hung in the air and soaked into everything. The workers joked that it was like being at the beach but without the sun or the sand or the fun.

"Do we have the list of people who have arrived at the new displaced persons camp yet? The one near Frankfurt?" Anna opened the

window, fanning herself uselessly with her sweating hand. She had read about the new camp in the town of Zeilsheim that had been established specifically for the survivors of the concentration camps. The Americans' original plan to house the nearly-dead victims alongside homeless German civilians and war prisoners had been a disaster, and a visiting American senator had made a stink to the American military government. Now the survivors had their own camp, run by themselves, with extra rations and medical care.

"It's still a mess. I've got a man headed over there this afternoon. He can try to get a list. Did you get a previous address for Mr. Morgenstern?"

Anna sorted through the papers on the table. "Just for his gallery, as listed on the labels." She found the note she was looking for and deciphered her own handwriting. "Braubachstrasse. In the old part of the city, near St. Paul's church. It was destroyed in 1944. No information on where he lived."

"It's a long shot to locate him. You know that, right? I doubt we'll find a single owner or even a family member of any of these collectors." Cooper waved an irritated hand over the paintings stacked along the walls. "The best we can hope for is that they show up here with their ownership and provenance documents intact. Anyway, I need you to move a little faster with getting all this sorted. You really don't need to memorize each painting. We have other work to focus on."

Two workers carried a large metal desk into the adjacent room. A crash echoed as a drawer slid out and hit the terrazzo floor. One man cursed at the other, who laughed as they maneuvered the desk through the doorway.

“What about her Fragebogen?” Anna asked. “Did you check Frau Lange’s Fragebogen?” She should have known better to bring up procedural correctness and bureaucracy with Cooper, but she couldn’t help it. Rules were rules, and all Germans had to complete the Americans’ questionnaire that whittled Germans’ loyalties down to a series of checked and unchecked boxes. *Yes, I was a Nazi, but I didn’t mean to be.*

Cooper nodded. “Frankfurt even signed off on it—she’s squeaky clean. That’s good enough for me.” He checked his watch. “Hurry up, will you? Be upstairs in five minutes.”

“I look forward to meeting Frau Lange.” Anna hoped she sounded enthusiastic. She finished logging in the painting on the intake form, filling in the identifying numbers from the stamps on the back, and checking one last time for any other damage. Before she set it back in its crate, she took another look, as if to say good bye. Once the paintings were crated, they were put into storage and their paperwork filed away. It might be months or years before anyone saw them again. Until a valid claim was filed by an heir or other party, these valuable and treasured pieces were officially the responsibility of the US government. Unofficially, Anna had made it her responsibility. It was the least she could do.

Eva Lange was no fusty matron in a tweed suit. The woman sitting across from Cooper’s desk when Anna arrived was tall and elegant, her stocking legs tucked at an angle, crossed at the ankle, and completed by a pair of delicate dark red pumps. Her straight back and folded hands spoke of a certain upbringing, but the worn, gray wool suit that hung on her frame, much too warm for the heat of day, echoed the tough times. Her blond hair was pulled into a roll at the nape of her long neck, and

her skin, although smooth, was the color of dishwater. She had spruced up with some hyacinth-smelling perfume, and the anemic stain of red on her lips gave her the appearance of a colorized photograph. The woman's gaze slid somewhere over Anna's head as she scanned the meager office.

Anna reached for her own hair. She felt shabby in the men's pants and boots she wore along with her dingy, faded blouse. The woman stood when she saw Anna and extended a hand.

"Hello, I am Eva Lange," she said in English, which Anna assumed was for Cooper's benefit.

Anna returned the greeting and pulled the chair from her desk alongside Cooper. Anna and Cooper shared an office, with her desk under the window next to his, but she had the feeling that she was interrupting. Anna looked at her boss. He was returning to his old self now that his job at the Collecting Point was once again secured. They had been working together for a little over a month and had gotten off to a rocky start. Cooper was unaccustomed to Army protocol and driven by an earnest desire to do good in a bad world. Now, chastened after having taken the matter of a stolen painting into his own hands, he was trying to toe the line. Anna amused herself with the knowledge that she had saved his job and that, technically, he was in her debt. It was like a little coin she kept sewn into the hem of her pants, hidden from view but ready to be cashed in if needed. But no one had yelled at them at all this week. Cooper hadn't broken any rules, she hadn't told any lies, and everything had been *by the book*, as the Americans liked to say. It was only a matter of time before he was back to his old self.

Cooper was beaming. Anna had never seen him so happy to meet any German. For him, Germans were objects of suspicion. He tried to hide it but didn't succeed.

“Frau Lange comes to us from Frankfurt,” he said, scanning a paper in front of him. “The Staedel Museum.” He gestured as if the museum was right next door. “Very impressive, Frau Lange. An actual qualified person. Welcome.”

Eva Lange smiled, and Anna felt a cool breeze waft across the room.

“Thank you, Captain. I am honored to be here. And it’s Fraulein, not Frau.” She cocked her head to the side, steadying her eyes on Cooper. “I have never been married.”

Anna saw color rise in Cooper’s cheeks.

“You have very impressive qualifications, Fraulein, as I said, so we’ll put you to good use.” Cooper smiled and then looked down at the papers in his hand, pretending to scrutinize something in detail.

Anna caught herself rolling her eyes and making a sucking sound with her lips, which she covered by pretending to clear her throat. She felt stupid and out of place, as if someone had erased her part in a play.

Cooper remembered she was in the room. “Frau Klein, would you run over to the front office and make sure all the needed papers are in place? I want Fraulein Lange to start right away.”

“I checked with them on my way in,” Eva said, “to be sure they have everything, which they do. So, I guess I am all yours.” She smiled. “Is that how you say it?”

“Excellent. Anna will see that you get your papers, and then I’ll go over the rules of the building with you. Who can come and go. What stays. Who has the keys, et cetera. We tightened up security, so you’ll need to watch yourself.” He nodded and pushed his chair back.

Eva Lange fidgeted with the bag she held on her lap. “Yes, of course. I understand.”

Anna considered the new woman's credentials. She was young for someone with such an impressive resume, especially considering that after 1933, the business of museums was a particular interest of the Nazis, and by 1937, they had raided most of them, taking what they wanted for themselves and declaring the rest "degenerate." In 1933 Anna had been eighteen years old. If Eva was ten years older, that put her very close to Cooper's age now, and would have made her twenty-eight the year the Nazis declared their war on art. Anna tried to do the math.

"Were you at the Stadel long?" Anna heard herself ask.

Eva Lange jerked her head as if she had forgotten Anna was there. "I was there until 1939, when everything was moved out to the country for safekeeping. After that, there was no work for people such as myself. Unless, of course, you joined the Party. They took a special interest in museum curators, as you know."

"So you must have known Jacob Morgenstern?" Maybe Fraulein Lange would prove useful, even if she was annoying.

Eva made a show of searching her mind. "No, I don't think so. Should I?"

"He was a dealer in Frankfurt. He had a gallery in the Altstadt. I thought you might have crossed paths."

"No, I can't say that I recall. But, you know, there were so many galleries in Frankfurt before the war. My memory might be failing me." She regarded Anna, waiting for the next question.

"What did you do after you left the museum? How did you live?"

Eva Lange turned in her chair to face Anna. "I moved in with my father and did menial work to earn a few marks. Cleaned houses for a while, then I was a cook. I worked in the barracks, cooking for the troops."

“Oh. I thought that was a Frauenschaft job,” Anna said, referring to the Nazi women’s guild. “For the fatherland and all that.”

“Not necessarily,” Eva said. “There were ways around that. If you were clever. I am sure you were in the same boat?” She turned her attention back to Cooper and addressed him, tossing Anna aside. “I am so very grateful to you, Captain. As you can see from my qualifications, I will be able to help your work very much.”

“Yes, you will be a fine addition to our little team. We need all the help we can get. I’m up to my armpits in art, and I’m starting not to enjoy it anymore. I’ll be happy to have you on board.” He turned to Anna, getting back to business. “Frau Klein? The credentials?”

Anna pushed her chair back under her desk. She swept a cold gaze over Cooper and Eva Lange as she stood, hoping to reassert some upper hand, but Eva caught her eye and added a satisfied smile for good measure.

“I’m sorry, I have to finish my work downstairs,” she said. “The paintings are waiting to be shelved. I can get the papers for you when I finish.”

Cooper’s eyebrows twitched as he straightened in his chair. He paused before he spoke through a long exhale. “Very well, Frau Klein. I shall get them myself. You are dismissed.”

As Anna lingered in the hallway, she was surprised to find that she was seething. The way Cooper had sent her on a clerk’s errand and swooned over this woman’s qualifications. How he had dismissed her, literally. The way Eva Lange had flirted with Cooper, her academic prowess wrapped in an elegant package with long legs. An entitled, smug package.

She took the stairs two at a time, as if to outrun the anger that was quickly turning into jealousy.

“Frau Klein, is everything all right?” The question from Karla Albrecht, the young woman behind the reception desk, slowed Anna’s pace. She had only been there a week and was trying to make herself useful. Earnest and pretty, Karla, too, had taken to wearing men’s pants, a bold move for someone in such a visible post. Her job was to support the field officers and staff in whatever way was needed, which meant that mostly she relayed messages between people who passed by her desk throughout the day. She was like a human message board.

“Fine. Thanks, Karla. And how are things with you?” Anna approached the desk, happy to have an excuse to take a break.

“Who is that woman in Captain Cooper’s office? Is she new?” Karla pushed the big round glasses she wore up the bridge of her nose. Anna suspected the glasses were purely aesthetic, hand-me-downs from a grandmother perhaps, intended to make the wearer seem smarter. Karla was serious about her job; her young, porcelain face was set in an expression of earnest analysis that made every conversation take on the air of a mystery that needed solving. She was much prettier than she knew, with her thick brown hair pulled back from a heart-shaped face, a long slender neck, and the upright carriage of a dancer. Everything about her was delicate, except her personality, which was fearless.

“Yes, she is. Eva Lange. From the Staedel in Frankfurt.”

“Fancy. Is she going to work with you?”

“I think I’m going to work *for* her, the way it sounded to me.”

Karla chuckled, but then her face turned serious. “Want me to keep an eye on her for you?” She nodded and provided her own response. “I’ll let you know if I see anything.”

“You do that.” Anna made a show of a furtive glance around the lobby, as if they were hatching a plot together. “And keep me posted,” she whispered.

“Yes ma’am.” The fake dramatics were lost on Karla, who straightened the papers on her desk and turned toward her typewriter. “Now, I better get back to work.”

“Enough chitchat,” Anna agreed. She put Eva and her lipstick and her hyacinth perfume out of her mind and headed downstairs.

Amalia played with her braid, twisting it around her finger and pulling the end into her mouth. She sat on the bed that she now shared with Anna and Madeleine since Oskar had moved in and begun sleeping on the sofa. The four of them sharing what was left of Madeleine’s apartment—a living room, kitchen, and bath—made for very close quarters, but so far, aside from a few grumblings about elbow room, they had managed well enough. Madeleine, the oldest and dearest friend of Anna’s late mother, had taken them in when they showed up on her doorstep in the summer. They had become an improvised family of sorts, and Anna dared hope that things would settle down into a routine, even if a difficult one. She lay back on the bed and stared at the crumbling plaster on the ceiling.

“What did you do all day?” Anna directed her question at Oskar who was in charge of Amalia, her six-year-old daughter. At age ten, he was the best babysitter she could find, even if he was one to run loose in the black market and return home with untold treasures, like an egg or a small bag of real coffee. Anna never asked how he got them.

“Oh, we went here and there.” The boy shrugged. “Don’t worry. We were good,” he added as he collapsed himself onto the ground next to her. His eyes twinkled. “We have some fresh bread for supper.”

Anna shook her head. “Don’t tell me. I don’t want to know.” She had gotten very good at not knowing. It was a skill that had served her well for the last decade. Until she got a stronger foothold into the new world, she was resigned to relying on the old habit, even if she knew it was wrong.

“This came today.” He pulled an envelope from the pocket of his pants and handed it to her. “It was under the door.”

Anna pushed herself up onto her elbows and regarded the envelope before taking it. It was official and American. A little shockwave pushed through her body. The officials were not in the business of mailing good news to Germans. She had not even told Oskar about the letter she had received from the UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, in charge of refugees, with which he was registered. That letter threatened to upend his young life all over again, just when he had gotten a small toehold. And, since she was now his unofficial guardian, the letter threatened her with the same.

She shoved that thought out of her mind and took the envelope, tearing into the flap with her index finger. She skimmed the one-page letter inside, looking for the verbs that would indicate whatever action was being imposed upon her by the great American military. Her breath caught in her throat.

“What’s wrong?” Oskar asked.

Anna’s eyes floated over the words: *requisitioned, housing, billeting, officers*.... She folded the letter back into the envelope.

“Nothing.” She smiled. “Some official nonsense about new rules. Nothing to worry about.”

“I don’t believe you.” Oskar snatched the letter from her hand and ran into the kitchen.

“Oskar, give it back.” She made only a feeble attempt, sinking back onto the bed. He was right. The *Amis* were requisitioning Madeleine’s house to billet officers. They had two days to get out, or they would be forcibly removed. No assistance was offered or provided, no appeal allowed. Their little home was being taken away. She had known it was a possibility, but she had thought they might be spared. Now she felt stupid for expecting anything different. She closed her eyes and tried to think.

“This says we have to leave, doesn’t it?” Oskar tossed the letter onto her chest. “It says the *Amis* are moving in here.”

“Is that true, Mama?” Amalia whispered. “Where will we go?”

“It will be all right,” Anna said, fuming at Oskar. “Don’t worry.”

Amalia tugged on a ragged fingernail. She was so small, so vulnerable. *Dammit. Just when things were looking up.*

“Tell your stinking *Amis* they should put that letter where the sun doesn’t shine,” Oskar said. “Damn *Amis* think they can take everything. Like they haven’t already.”

“That’s enough from you, Oskar. Go and put on some water so you can take a bath. You are filthy.” She turned to Amalia. “*Maus*, don’t you worry. I will fix it. And as long as we’re all together, everything will be all right.” She considered if this was a flat-out lie or a kind of prayer. They had two days. She would talk to Cooper first thing in the morning.

“But where will we go? And who will live here in Auntie’s house? It’s her house. Will the *Amis* live here?” Amalia’s whines grated on Anna’s nerves.

“I don’t know, *Maus*. I will find out tomorrow.”

The front door scraped on the wooden floor as it opened. “Auntie!” Amalia called and tumbled off the bed to run and greet Madeleine.

The old woman appeared in the doorway from the small foyer and held out her arms to sweep Amalia into an embrace. Madeleine was the only one among them who appeared unchanged by the war and its tragedies. She had suffered, too. First her son, Bernhardt, was killed in the Great War and then her husband Otto had succumbed to the strain of life in the Third Reich. The final blow came when her best friend—Anna’s mother—died in the bombing of Vienna that past March. Even as the war staggered to its inevitable gruesome end, it had taken more. They had come so far, but it had not been far enough. Still, Madeleine could pull herself up by her bootstraps and see the possibility of things getting better. Most days, Anna was happy to even find her bootstraps. Pulling herself up was another story.

“How are you, Auntie?” Anna stood to take Madeleine’s bag from her. “*Maus*, let Auntie sit down. She’s very tired.”

“Not at all, my dear.” Madeleine put a hand on Anna’s shoulder. “Stop fussing. You have enough to deal with.” She smiled. “How are things with our Americans?”

“Well enough. Nothing much to report today.”

“No masterpieces today? Or is it becoming old hat already?”

Anna laughed. “A few. I did work with the odd Old Master. It was a typical day.”

Oskar returned from the kitchen and greeted Madeleine with a respectful formality that Anna found endearing. He half-bowed and

almost clicked his heels together as he took her hand. "Frau Wolf, good evening."

"*Hallo*, you little rascal," Madeleine replied. "What have you been up to?"

"I am heating water for the bath, if you would like to have one," Oskar said. "I don't really need it."

Amalia giggled and held her nose. "Yes, you do, too. You smell."

The two children began laughing and Anna shooed them out of the room. "Go clean up, both of you. I need some fresh air in here."

Madeleine sat on the sofa and looked at Anna. "So, really, nothing happened today?" Her eyebrows rose under a direct gaze.

Anna busied herself with imaginary wrinkles on her blouse. "No."

"You, my dear girl, are a terrible liar." Madeleine crossed her legs and leaned back against the deflated sofa cushions.

Anna deflected. "There was a new hire at the Collecting Point. A curator with big credentials. I find her irritating, but it's nothing."

"Irritating? In what way?"

Anna searched for a plausible reply that would not give away the churning feelings. She cleared her throat. "She is a know-it-all. Sort of arrogant. Kind of inserted herself into things. And now I have to work with her."

"I see. Inserted herself between you and Captain Cooper, you mean?"

Anna shook her head. "No, of course not. She's just...well, she's rude. To me."

Madeleine smiled. "And not to Cooper, is that it?"

Anna crossed the room and began pulling clothes from the drawers in the big walnut wardrobe in the corner. "I think it's time I did

some wash. Would you like me to wash your dress?" She gestured toward the blue cotton dress Madeleine wore.

"No, it's still fine, I think. Why don't you sit with me for a minute?" She patted the cushion next to her.

Anna was stuck. She felt like a school girl as she sat down, dutiful.

"Auntie, I know what you think. I know what everyone thinks, but it's not like that."

Madeleine chuckled. "I don't think anything, my dear. And that's not even what I want to talk about. I want to talk about the other thing."

"What other thing?"

"The letter."

A surge of heat behind her ears made the skin on Anna's cheeks begin to prickle. Her eyes moved to the envelope from the housing authority that lay on the bed. The letter about Oskar from the refugee agency was in her bag. Two life-upending letters. "What letter?"

"Don't ask, 'what letter?' You know what I mean."

Anna heard herself start speaking. "I'll go talk to the refugee people about Oskar. He has a home; they don't need to concern themselves with him. I'll get it straightened out." She closed her mouth.

Madeleine shook her head. "You haven't answered him, have you?"

Anna said nothing, waiting for Madeleine to explain.

"He is still your husband." Madeleine patted Anna's hand as if to wake her from a daze. She smiled, but her eyes did the opposite.

Madeleine was talking about a different letter than the one about Oskar or even the one from the housing agency. She meant the one Anna had received from her husband, Thomas, at the end of August. The one telling her he wanted them to come home to their little village in Thuringia in the gentle, tree-covered hills near Weimar. The

home she had left when it became part of the Russian sector. She had stashed the letter in the desk after reading it only once. She could not bring herself to read it again, even though she sensed Thomas's hand in the smooth strokes of the ink. She could see him sitting at his desk in the bedroom of their house, the light from the window highlighting the worry on his face. In the weeks since the letter had arrived, his words hung over her every moment. The only thing that distracted her was the work at the Collecting Point.

"Yes." What else could she offer?

Madeleine shook her head. "It's not right of you to leave Thomas hanging on the line like that. Don't you care about him even a little?"

"Of course I care about him. He's my husband. I love him. I just don't know how to tell him, that's all." She sank into the cushion. "How can I tell him we aren't coming home?"

"He deserves to know, my dear. And there will be legalities to deal with."

"Legalities?"

"Yes, of course. You'll need to file for divorce. You can't stay married under these circumstances. You must let him go, Anna. You can't have it both ways."

Anna shook her head. "I can't do that. Not to Thomas. Never. I could persuade him to come to Wiesbaden and be with us here, in the American sector." She knew this was impossible. Thomas hated the Americans almost as much as he hated the Nazis. He was happy in the Russian sector. He had said so in his letter.

Madeleine patted her arm. "Then do it. But tell him the truth so he can make his own choice. You are being unkind. How long have you had the letter?"

“Three weeks only.” Anna tried to act as if it had not, in fact, felt like an eternity. “I haven’t had much time to think about it.”

“You held your breath for months to hear from him, and now you don’t have time to send him a reply? Shame on you, child.”

Anna hated when Madeleine scolded her. She heard her own mother’s voice and she knew she deserved it. She thought of her husband and the life—the entire world—she had left behind that were now so removed, as if she had read the story in a book. She tried to muster an emotion that would be appropriate, but all she felt was fear.

“Thomas is a good man, and he deserves a future. I understand that you don’t want to go back into the Russian sector. But if he is rebuilding his life there, then you must let him go. And the Americans won’t let him back here so easily either. He is a communist, he will have to say so on his Fragebogen. The *Amis* won’t like that at all. You hear the news, don’t you?”

Anna exhaled and looked at her hands, as if they held some answer. Thomas had a house and, as a doctor, an official position in the Russian occupational government. Were the Russians also kicking Germans out of their houses? Maybe if they all went back, they would at least have a place to live. No, it wasn’t worth it.

“Divorce?” The word came from a small voice in the doorway. “Mama?”

“*Maus*, you aren’t supposed to be listening.” Anna stifled a groan. She held out her hand for her daughter who stood clutching her doll, her eyes wide between a tangle of undone braids. “Come here.” She wanted to comfort her, but Amalia turned and disappeared into the bathroom, slamming the door behind her.

“She’ll be all right.” Madeleine stood up. “I’ll get the rations put away.”

“There’s something else, Auntie.” Anna reached for Madeleine’s hand. It was getting dark inside as the light of the late summer evening faded, but Anna waited to light the candle on the side table. The dim light felt like a protective barrier. She held the letter up.

“What’s that?”

“The house has been requisitioned. We have to be out in two days.” Anna passed the letter to her, but Madeleine didn’t open it.

Madeleine sat down on the bed. A few strands of her silver hair had come loose from their bun and trailed down her back. Today she looked like an old woman, which she was, but she never appeared that way to Anna. She was defeated. Anna surmised that her thoughts were with those she had lost. Madeleine had remained steadfast and abiding while everything went to hell around her. But now, the war had finally unmoored even her.

Madeleine tapped the folded letter on her knee in a steady rhythm, her silhouette outlined in gray on gray. Anna blamed herself for this turn of events, as if she had brought the Americans’ attention to the house, even though she knew the eviction had nothing to do with her. The home was relatively intact, the plumbing functioned, it had a roof and a door, and thus was desirable property for the Americans. As the occupation settled in, more and more *Amis* needed places to stay. And she had noticed a lot of visitors at the Collecting Point, other Monuments Men from Munich, and officers with loud voices and big strides taking up space in the halls. Cooper had been preoccupied with meetings that took him away from doing the in-the-field work that he enjoyed more. Everything was changing again already. She had found a good

job with the Monuments Men, and Cooper had been her advocate for a better job with more pay. She had gained a toehold that turned into solid footing and could see a path emerging into her future. When the letter from Thomas had come, asking her to return to an entirely different future, her choice had been almost immediately clear. She loved Thomas, even his idealistic commitments to a communist system in a world now devoid of any scrap of idealism, and he was father to a daughter who thought he hung the moon and stars.

She knew his beliefs when she married him, before bright, blinding lines were drawn and people had to make life and death choices about what they believed. During the war, the Nazis had hunted communists with unrelenting cruelty, stringing suspects up from the light poles in the same town square in Weimar where she and Thomas had once spent warm Sunday afternoons together, walking and talking as if nothing else mattered. But when those beliefs became a threat to their safety, he became darker and furtive in his ways. It was a matter of survival, and she went along, keeping ears and eyes closed for the sake of Amalia. But at night she woke, gasping and sweating, from nightmares of his face on the lolling heads of the bodies hanging next to the now-silent fountain in Weimar's central square. Even when it was clear that the Russians were no benevolent conquerors, he never faltered in his devotion to their ideology.

But she saw no future in communism, no matter how much Thomas saw one, no matter how much he wished for it. A more scrupulous or pragmatic woman would have taken this chance to return to her husband who was sure to be rewarded for his communist loyalties with a choice position and special perks, like milk and eggs and bottles of vodka. In the Russian sector, they would have a roof over their heads,

and not be evicted into the street on a moment's notice. Her husband, the eminent doctor, had stature, and by extension, so would she. She might even have electricity and reliably running water, and Amalia would go to school every day instead of running around the black market with Oskar. But it would come at a steep price. There was a reason the *Amis* despised the Russians. All the Americans' talk about freedom and justice and opportunity—they believed it. It was not an abstract concept, it was their way of being. And it was starting to rub off on her.

And already so much had changed. Anna was now responsible for a boy who had no one and nothing. He didn't even know the truth about how much had been taken from him. That was another secret Anna kept. The secrets were beginning to pile up inside her like garbage, and she had to think to keep them straight. As they sat in the dark, she worried once again what would become of them. For a moment, her new life had looked so promising. But, of course, that was in her own mind where unpleasant tasks were ignored and she created her own reality. She hadn't even told Thomas that she wasn't coming back. He hadn't any idea what had happened to them, and she didn't even have the decency to tell her husband that their paths had separated.

She took Madeleine's hand. "I'll talk to Captain Cooper first thing tomorrow. I'm sure he can stop us from being evicted. Please don't worry."

Madeleine sighed. "This is a fine ending to the story. They sit over there in their Collecting Point trying to return every scrap of paper and oily canvas to their rightful owners, but they have no issue with snatching my home out from under me. Isn't that wonderful? And now we are out on the street."